



# MITIGATING ECONOMIC RECESSION IN NIGERIA THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY

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## ABSTRACT

Educational traditionalism with its emphasis on rote learning, memorization of facts, accumulation of subject matter, etc, and its pedagogical strategy that demands learners to sit down and listen attentively during delivery of instructions is to blame for production of graduates who are serially unemployed in Nigeria. In constructivist model, learners are actively involved in the learning process and lessons are adequately presented in democratic, interactive, collaborative environments enabling learners to be creative and constructive. This makes it possible for learners to apply what they have learnt to their future daily lives. In the end individuals become self-reliant and poised to eke out their living independent of government paid jobs. This goes a long way to boost the nation's economy since rate of production would be high. This paper is of the opinion that economic recession could be mitigated in Nigeria if teaching methods are consistent with constructivist model.

**KEYWORDS:** Constructivism, Pedagogy, Economy, Recession.

## INTRODUCTION:

Over the years, Nigeria has had issues with provision of both human and material resources for national development. Nigeria's graduates and school leavers are hardly employable because they rarely possess the relevant skills that would enable them fit in the competitive world of production and work. This has contributed immensely to the high level unemployment, poverty and destitution in the country. The situation has become even more destitute in the current era of economic recession with the nation's economy almost grounded and its accompanying deceleration in gross domestic production, high inflation, increased unemployment, etc., resulting in abject poverty with over 80% Nigerians living below \$1 a day. Each government would advertently point accusing fingers at the other while the meagre available resources are lavished in gigantic and non-humanitarian projects that are hardly completed.

Virtually, every aspect of the nation's structure is bereft of funds to further their developmental proposal owing to the current economic recession. According to Fabumni (2009) economic recession refers to a state when the government of a nation, an organization or a company is unable to maintain the current productive capacity owing to inadequate fund. Recession is sometimes engineered by the nation's over-dependence on oil coupled with reckless spending on the part of government with the confidence that oil prices would always be on the rise. In support of this, Komolafe (2008) identifies fall in prices of crude oil which is the only item Nigeria depends as well as huge salaries allocated to public office holders that the nation's economy cannot sustain as some of the causes of economic recession.

Poor educational standards that translate to production of school leavers only prepared for white collar jobs are to blame for economic recession. This is further sustained by over independence on government paid jobs and craze for political positions. Education is the bedrock of any nation's economic and socio-political strength. In fact, any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of a society has to be preceded by education (FRN, 2014). For education to occasion change in the society, it has to be qualitative. UNICEF (2000) describes qualitative education as encouraging knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are linked to natural goals for education and positive participation in society.

Teaching-learning approaches go a long way to determine educational quality. Traditional teaching model for instance, depreciates qualitative education. Unfortunately, methodology of teaching and learning in Nigeria to a large extent has based on rote model, memorization of facts, accumulation of subject matter, etc. Production of rank and file graduates enabled by traditional curriculum is responsible for current economic crises in Nigeria. Admittedly, more progressive and experienced approach offered by constructivism would churn out graduates that would meaningfully engage themselves in creative works and earn their living in them. Education for self-reliance would only be enabled and activated by a constructivist approach to teaching. Production of graduates with vocational and professional skills ready to adapt suitably in the society poised to apply whatever skills they have imbibed from their areas of studies for their sustenance would dramatically resolve economic crises in the country. This is because; there is a strong correlation between the proportion of technical and vocational skills acquired by learners and per capita income (ADB, 2009).

## ANALYSIS OF BASIC CONCEPTS:

### Economic Recession:

A recession is when an economy significantly declines for at least six months. It

is usually explained in terms of a drop in these economic indicators: real GDP, income, employment, manufacturing and retail sales. Recession occurs basically when GDP growth is negative for two consecutive quarters or more. McKinney (2017) defines economic recession as a period of general economic decline, which is typically accompanied by a drop in the stock market, an increase in unemployment, housing, market, etc. Government's imposition of higher rates often leads to rise in cost of money resulting in reduction or lowering of consumer and government borrowing. When this happens, consumer confidence declines and the effect is low demand of goods and services. Again, the financing of business operations becomes harder through borrowing and firms reduce their workforce culminating at gross unemployment.

In his description of economic recession, Richard (2009) articulates that under ideal conditions, a country's economy should have the household sector as net savers and the corporate sector as net borrowers with the government budget nearly balanced and net export near zero but recession sets in when the relationships become imbalanced. In all, in economic recession, there is a general slowdown in economic activities arising from business cycle contraction.

### Constructivism:

Constructivism is an epistemology that views learning as an active, constructive process whereupon the learner is an information constructor. It applies to how people learn and to the nature of knowledge. Closely related to philosophical phenomenology, constructivism advocates for subjective representation of objective reality. In reaction to proponents of objective perception of reality, Edmund Husserl in Stumpf (2000:452) asserts: "For me, the world is nothing more than what I am aware of and what appeared valid in such cogitations (my acts of thought), I cannot live, experience, think, value and act in any world, which is not in some sense in me, and derives its meaning and truth from me". In line with this reasoning, constructivism advances the view that the individual is the basis of knowledge. Objective conception of reality attempts to exterminate the individual in the entire process of knowledge construction.

Against the notion that knowledge is an already prepared content, constructivists maintain that thoughts, actions, experiences, etc, are all occasioned by the individual mental frame. That is why constructivism as a teaching-learning theory emphasizes liberal and democratic learning environment. In support of this view, Ertner and Newby (1993) present constructivism as a reaction to didactic approaches such as behaviourism and programme instruction, which states that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. This implies that knowledge is constructed based on personal experiences and hypothesis of the environment. These hypotheses are continuously tested by learners through social negotiation with each learner having a different interpretational construction of knowledge process (Cooper, 1993).

Jean Piaget, a genetic epistemologist in his theories on the genesis of knowledge focuses on human development in relation to what is occurring with an individual as opposed to development that is influenced by other humans. Within this context, Piaget (1950) explains constructivism in terms of the interaction between human experiences and their reflexes or behaviour patterns. Social constructivists subscribe to the position of Piaget that learning is an active process where learners are to learn to discover principles, concepts and facts for themselves, hence the importance of encouraging guesswork and intuitive thinking in learners.

As a concept then, social constructivism sources from Vygotsky and it is built on the theory that knowledge is initially constructed in a social context and later appropriated by individuals (Newman, Griffin and Cole, 1991). For Vygotsky (1978), the process of sharing individual perspectives usually called collaborative elaboration results in learners constructing understanding together that would not be possible alone. In contrast to social constructivism, relational constructivism picks up the epistemological threads and argues that humans cannot overcome their limited condition of reception. Relational constructivism according to Kraus (2015) focuses on the relational conditions applying to human perceptual processes. Lease and Younie (2001) present communal constructivism as the process whereby experts work together to create record and publish new knowledge in emerging areas. In all, constructivism projects learner-centred typology of learning whereupon learners are active participants in teaching-learning process.

#### **Pedagogy:**

Etymologically, the word "pedagogy" sources from the Greek word paidagogia, which is a synthesis of ago (I lead) and paidos (child) meaning to lead a child. Dictionary of Contemporary English defines it as the practice of teaching or the study of teaching. It relates to methodology of teaching, approaches and strategies of lesson delivery. Pedagogy consists of different types and variations of teaching. Shulman (1981) explains that pedagogy informs teaching strategies, teacher actions and teacher judgements and decisions by taking into consideration theories of learning, understanding of students, their needs, backgrounds and their interests.

Pedagogy can also be explained in terms of the teacher's ability to interact with students and the social and intellectual environment he seeks to establish.

It is pertinent to point out here that pedagogy is primarily not only about teaching. Smith and Smith (2008) contend that pedagogy needs to be explored through the thinking and practice of those educators who accompany learners; care for and about them; and bring learning into life, and teaching is just one aspect of their practice. Viewing pedagogy as the art and science of teaching exclusively results in failure to honour the historical significance of the concept. In this sense, pedagogy could be seen as the process of accompanying learners caring for and about them and bringing learning into life. Obviously, this task is not only performed by professional teachers. For the purpose of this paper, pedagogy is seen as the principles, practice or profession of teaching; the function or work of a teacher; the art and science of teaching; education; instructional methods.

#### **Constructivist Pedagogy:**

Constructivist pedagogy is a teaching and learning method based on the principle that individuals construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. It is based on the belief that learning occurs as learners are actively involved in a process of meaning and knowledge construction as opposed to passively receiving information. Learners then are the makers of meaning and knowledge. In clear terms, it includes learning by doing, active learning, project method, field trips, play way method, dramatization, collaborative learning, co-operative teaching, etc.

#### **Traditional Teaching Model and the Question of Functional/Qualitative Education in Nigeria:**

Traditionalism in education encourages facts memorization and emphasizes conveying of facts. Odoemenam and Ominyin (2014) define traditional learning model as teacher-centred delivery of instruction to classes of learners who are the receivers of information. It is back-to-basics conventional education or customary education that is based on long established customs centring basically on definition, instruction centre, marking and subject areas. This form of learning is not creative. It is also not consistent with the societal needs; the aspirations and interests of the learner. According to Cooper (1993), whereas, the traditionalist believes that the purpose of education is to pass on a body of knowledge (both factual and cultural) to future generations, the progressives believe that the purpose of education is to change attitudes and values to construct a politically correct, secular, socialist society.

It is true that from the 1960, Nigeria's education has been driven towards child-centred orientation but realistically these efforts are more or less theoretical. It cannot be doubted that learners' achievements are evaluated using written test and examinations. Again, examinations of candidates for jobs in the country are very much based on paper certificates. In spite of the fact that attempts have been made towards replacement of contents with skills, there are yet no enabling environment in the labour markets to discourage the incongruous attachment to content. This inglorious affinity to transmissional learning attributes is detrimental to the nation's economic growth. In the view of Ertmer et al (1993), traditional educational model turn learners to passive absorbers of information, while teachers are seen as custodians of knowledge and authority.

This mode of teaching and learning mar the attributes of functional or qualitative education, which ought to be attuned to openness to change, and evolution based on information changing contexts, and new understanding of nature of educational challenges. Traditional model of learning transmits subject matter and content in the form of raw materials to learners whereupon efforts are rarely made to get learners to internalize contents and to translate same to their daily lives. This

is not consistent with the features of functional education. Qualitative education formulates viable economies and put in place socio-political structures that support sustainable development.

Education is an instrument of change (FRN, 2017) and for it to occasion change in the society, education has to be qualitative encouraging knowledge, skills and attitudes linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. Of course this conception of education allows for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context. Functional education is learner-centred putting into account the interests and basic need of both the learner and the society. A learner-centred education must put in check modalities of content delivery especially in the areas of methods and approaches. Content itself has to depart from rigid subject matter to more progressive and realistic items that pre-suppose human needs and daily lives.

#### **Relationship Between Educational Quality and Economic Recession in Nigeria:**

The Federal Government of Nigeria in its National Policy on Education specifies the goals which education in Nigeria is to pursue. According to the policy, the five main national goals of Nigeria, which have been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education, are the building of:-

- A. A free and democratic society;
- B. A just and egalitarian society;
- C. A great and dynamic economy;
- D. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens;
- E. A united, strong and self-reliant nation (FRN, 2014:1);

To this end, achievement of the above goals leads to functional and qualitative education. In reaction to this the policy asserts that "there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria, to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual direction in education (FRN, 2014:2). Obviously, this could serve as a recap of what qualitative education is all about. If the nation's educational system fails to pursue or achieve these ends, it could simply be regarded as non-functional.

The nation's educational policies are sound and pleasant but they have been unfortunately obstructed by effective implementation strategies, which have hampered education as a lifelong process. Obetta (2008) reports that the greatest sources of funding educational programmes are through direct payment of fees by learners and this militates against the realization and actualization of the noble objectives of education. Poor implementation of educational policies has led to poor realization of educational objectives resulting in poor quality in education in Nigeria (Ezeani, 2013). This has impacted negatively on the nation's economy. Economic factors interact with educational development in a plurality of ways. In the first place, education provides manpower for economic development and sustenance. Obanya (2004) notes that economic development policies usually include human resources component, most of which will be through education in one form or another and human being is a nation's most important resource and its proper development, utilization and management is a key aspect of economic development. The level of development of education itself determines the level of development of an economy. In this regard, Adedeji, (1990) argues that better skilled person with positive, productive attitudes and values do influence economic productivity through their improved earnings and investments in different forms. A flourishing economy is more capable of generating employment and creating opportunities for absorbing the skilled products of the education system, thus enabling the society to see the immediate utility of education.

Economic recession in Nigeria among other things was caused by poor economic planning. People that were made to man the economy of the country were not experts in economics. There was no diversification of the economy arising from poor technological and entrepreneurial abilities. Qualitative education would prepare experts in the areas of economic management and inculcation of relevant skills in technology and entrepreneurship that would lead to sustenance of the nation's economic and diversification of sources of income. Acquisition of relevant technological skills from qualitative education would reduce unemployment as citizens would have engaged themselves in live sustaining ventures. This would go a long way to close the gap between the rich and the poor, which hitherto was widened by forex policy practices.

Again, the banning of importation of certain essential products without first of all considering alternative ways of providing such banned goods and services led to high inflation rate. The simultaneous removal of oil subsidy and the banning of such essential commodities occasioned austerity measures on the average Nigerians. Incidentally, budget delay, rise in domestic oil price as a result of subsidy removal, fall in global oil price, etc, brought about untold hardship on the poor masses, who absolutely depend on the government salaries for their survival. Other indices of recession as high interest rates, high taxation, policy conflict, etc, are all wrong avenues of generating funds put in place by the government, which could have been averted if production was high.

### Mitigating Economic Recession in Nigeria through Constructivist Pedagogy

Constructivist pedagogy bases on the principle that students learn how to learn by giving them the training to take initiative for their own learning experiences. Learners are actively involved, environment is democratic, activities in the classrooms are interactive and student-oriented and the teachers are only facilitators of learning. In this teaching model, there is a focus on social and communication skills as well as collaboration and exchange of ideas. Odoemenam and Ominyi (2014:92) expose the basic tenets of constructive teaching as:

- A. Experimentation whereby students perform experiment and discuss their findings in class;
- B. Research project whereby students engage in researches and present their findings also in class;
- C. Field trips whereby students are allowed to put the concepts and ideas discussed in class in a real-world context;
- D. Films which provide visual perspective of content learnt and introduce another approach to learning;
- E. Class discussion;
- F. Discussion fora, wikis and blogs applicable to online learning that enable learners to actively construct knowledge;

The role of the teacher in constructivist approach to learning is to prompt and facilitate discussion. The teacher asks questions that would enable the learners to develop their own conclusions on a subject. Palmer (1997) writes that good teachers join self and subjects in the fabrics of life because they teach from an integral and undivided self they manifest in their own lives and evoke in their students a capacity for connectedness. Teachers approach in this regard can be in the form of modelling, coaching and scaffolding.

On this note, it is therefore recommended that:

- A. Government should resuscitate Introductory Technology Workshops in all schools especially primary and secondary schools to ensure that teaching and learning are experimental.
- B. Government should organize conferences, seminars and workshops for teachers to train them on constructivist teaching skills.
- C. Government should enhance access to credit for small scale entrepreneurs especially young graduates and school leavers.
- D. Government should open up employment opportunities to engage jobless citizens. This would go a long way to increase production and lead to increased GDP.
- E. Government should boost agriculture by provision of funds to trained farmers in a bid to enhance exportation of farm produce.

### CONCLUSION:

Constructivist pedagogy therefore is the ideal in order to achieve functional education that would lead to stable economy and national development. This is because constructivism offers instructional approaches that are congruent with current researches on learning. Furthermore, learning model that is constructivist fosters acquisition of appropriate skills, technologically and otherwise that would make learners to be self-reliant citizens when they leave the school. Production of graduates that are self-reliant would go a long way to reduce unemployment, which are the major bane of national development and the crux of the nation's economic crises. Njoko (2016) affirms the need for multiple competences, particularly among youths as a measure to curb increasing global joblessness. This of course would be done through emphasis on skills that lead to production.

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